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ABSTRACT

Home economics education is not different from career education, but career education should include as a primary thrust preparation for family life. Career education itself is concerned with total development of all students, home and community learning, self-development, and is integrated learning. Just as career education will increase student options in education, employment, and life style, it can also increase options about the family pattern and the potential of an improved physical, psychological, and social quality of human life. Objectives of home economics education as a part of career education include: (1) helping students achieve educational outcomes relating directly to the family, (2) assisting girls to explore the dual role of homemaking and a career, (3) preparation of both males and females for their roles in the family, (4) experience in family life and home economics-related occupations, (5) emphasis on educational processes related to career education, (6) providing adults with opportunities to develop family living skills, and (7) strengthening the educational climate at home. These objectives can be achieved through exploratory home economics courses, interdisciplinary learning, leadership, and expansion of home-based learning and mini-courses. (SC)

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TITLE: The Role of Home Economics in Career Education

Introduction

Most career education literature has been directed towards one role, the role of the paid worker. This movement has led to a neglect of other life roles and the impact they have on selection and preparation of a career. One of the most obvious omissions has been the role of the individual in the family.

Young people today need to understand the role of the family in society and different family styles. Each person should explore and clarify his own values about present and future family roles and prepare for a career role as a family member. Furthermore, each person must come to recognize the closeness of family and work roles. The relationship is so intimately interwoven that a decision in favor of one role usually results in a lessening of value in the other. For example, to advance professionally may provide additional income, but may rob one of time with the family.

The following statements by leading authors imply that today's society is making decisions that are seriously altering the family without being aware of how these changes will effect present or future society. Frederick Longburg, author of The Coming World Transformation, states, "The family is near the point of complete extinction." William Wolfe, a noted psychoanalyst, states, "The family is dead except for the first year or two of child raising." Toffler, in his book, Future Shock, expresses several possibilities of what shape the future family might take.

He refers to communal families, group marriage, and delayed childbirth through new processes.

Toffler also points to the emergence in today's society of the syndrone he labels as "serial marriages." Each marriage is viewed in much the same way as we presently view different jobs that make up one career. An individual moves from one marriage to another as his particular needs change, making marriage and family a temporary state rather than a permanent one. Such a temporary family structure cannot provide the sense of security needed by individuals in a changing society.

If the family is to remain stable then young people must receive preparation for their family roles, selecting a marriage partner and deciding the life style upon which to build a family structure is probably one of the most important decisions an individual has to make in his life. Yet, this often is done with little or no preparation. Nowhere is this more evident than in the inability of many couples to cope with the broadening role now available to women both within and outside the family. Young people today need to understand the changing values regarding the family and to clarify their own before making decisions about marriage and a family. To broaden the concept of career education to include preparation for family life may help preserve the family structure by making students more aware of their responsibilities. To fail to do this could leave many more individuals in our society confused and without a sure sense of purpose for their lives.

It is against this kind of background I want to pursue broadening the concept of career education. In doing this, five questions must be answered.

1. What does the word "career" mean?
2. What is career education?
3. What is career education in an operational context?
4. What are the possible objectives of home economics education as a part of career education?
5. What should be the role of the home economics teacher within the context of the broadening perspective of career education?

What does the word "career" mean? The meaning of career education is determined by how the term "career" is interpreted. If career is interpreted as a developmental process that encompasses a person's total life and his several life roles, career education must then encompass the total education process. A lot of people, however, including many professional educators, think of the term "career" as simply a replacement for the term "vocational." It should not be defined in the old vocational education sense, but must be recognized as a new concept in which the individual is prepared for a purposeful life in regard to his several life roles.

In this context the word "career" means far more than simply pursuing an occupation, being employed, or holding a job. It implies that

- a career as a mission in life influences and serves to integrate all areas of life.

- a career may or may not be a paid activity. Certainly homemaking is a career. And just as certainly, the role of the husband in the family must be viewed as a career.

- career does not denote a given educational level. It may demand considerable preparation in skills or less demanding training and less sophisticated skills.

- all in all, young people must discover for themselves where they are going. They must experience life for themselves within the concepts of the different careers they will live.

Career development, therefore, includes the choices and continuous adjustments an individual has to make throughout his life with regard to education, employment, his family, his other life roles and/or volunteer work roles as those decisions relate to present and future options and their associate life styles.

What is career education? If the term "career" indicates a purposeful life pattern, then the term "career education" implies a comprehensive educational process that facilitates the overall career development of the student. This process should apply equally well to his several life roles, work, family, citizenship, etc. It should involve self-discovery, self-determination, and the acquisition of values and skills consistent with one's needs.

What is career education operationally? Implementation of career education requires changes in both educational processes and outcomes. Yet, not only has career education often been narrowly defined, it has been even more narrowly put into practice. Because many career

education concepts are not new, many individuals and groups can readily grasp those aspects related to their areas of expertise but often ignore the total set of concepts underlying career education. It is all in a manner of looking at the total picture.

First, it is essential that career education be viewed as a total development of all students. To some educators, the purpose of career education is to see that all students leave school with skills necessary for entering productive work and thus all curriculum and educational experiences should be geared to this end. Career education does include acquiring job skills, but it also includes a commitment to total education for all, which would include helping students acquire skills for other life roles. A broadening career educational perspective would encourage students to see themselves in a variety of life roles.

Second, career education should include home and community learning. Many community leaders limit their operational interpretation of career education to something being done to students, in the school setting. However, it is not all the school and teachers employed by the school. Career education calls for a new way of thinking about where and under whom education occurs. Career education will fail unless the home and community become equal partners in teaching it. Both home and community provide learning laboratories for the skills of living in the adult world. Recognition and credit has to be granted to learning acquired outside the school. As students interact with adults

in various family roles and settings, their own values and goals regarding the family will be strengthened as much as their occupational values and goals.

Third, career education must be viewed in terms of self-development. Many vocational educators believe that career education means to explore the "real world," to get "hands-on" experiences. The phrase, the "real world," as they use it has included only the working world. It must be expanded to include experiences in terms of the family. Certainly without these experiences, career education is a hollow exercise in rhetoric, another program telling the students what it is like to be adults, but not giving them real experiences. Career education must facilitate the student's perception of himself not only as a worker, but as a parent, a husband or wife, etc. Just as it is important for the individual to be encouraged to imagine himself in a variety of future work roles, it is also important to encourage him to imagine himself in different family settings, roles, and types. Career education should not be limited to the traditional concepts of awareness, orientation, exploration, and preparation of standard life roles, but should also include awareness, orientation, and exploration in developing a self-concept about what kind of worker, parent, family, husband, or wife the individual wants to be. At each educational level, the home and the community can be utilized to help students explore and clarify their own self-concept. These experiences should be followed with appropriate feedback to give

a student the understanding and vocabulary needed to define his own values regarding the community, family, parenthood, and work.

Fourth, career education should be viewed as integrated learning. Some general educators interpret career education to mean a special unit or course on occupations taught by an English or social studies teacher. Such activities can and do add to the overall career education effort, but may effect no change on the basic nature and structure of the learning process. This is inadequate for students because they often cannot see the relationship of one course to another or between school and life. This is very important because career education can result in a young person being provided experiences in the "knowing, doing, and feeling" aspects of learning progress simultaneously rather than as isolated events. This is often accomplished when the liberal arts, fine arts, and practical arts are integrated into learning experiences involving the commitments of the total education community. The community, the home, the family, the vocational laboratory offer experiences, if properly selected, that can help students master learning in a given grade level. These settings can help students apply mathematics, science, and communication skills to plan and perform the many functions and tasks of the home and family. Instead of solving hypothetical problems, the student actually uses academic concepts and skills to solve real needs in the real world. Connecting school and life may enable individuals to escape the passive and isolated student role and become

productive and important community participants. Furthermore, experiential-based and student-centered learning can help the student find himself, provided he is given the right opportunity, assistance, and encouragement.

In essence, the family, the home, and all the roles that connect and relate to it can be viewed in the same way in which the work setting has been viewed in career education. The family has the same potential for making all learning relevant. Preparation for future parenthood is just as important as preparation for future work.

Just as it was indicated that career education will increase student options in education, employment, and life style, it can just as easily increase options about the family pattern and the potential of an improved physical, psychological and social quality of family life.

What are the possible objectives of home economics education as a part of career education?

The first objective should be the primary responsibility for helping all students achieve those educational outcomes that relate directly to the family. Among the outcomes should be included the following.

Each student should

- learn to be an intelligent consumer of goods and services. Possession of work skills would be of little value unless consumer skills are also developed.
- learn basic, sound nutrition habits.

- learn personal finance and money management.

- realize how important the role of the family is in defining values in a changing society. The contact between parents and their children has been severely cut in time compared with the past, and the opportunities to help develop the values of the young by the family may be much more limited today.

- understand the social, economic, and political implications of population growth.

- possess family planning skills.

- gain a personal philosophy about why the family exists.

- understand the changing role of the family and individual family members. It is important that the student understand how the family as it begins to change affects other family members.

- learn what skills are necessary for creating a family climate for rearing children. Considerably more emphasis needs to be given in home economics courses in the area of child development, not just up to age six but up through early childhood and adolescence. In particular that emphasis should deal with the emotional, social, and intellectual development of children. Parents' attitudes determine to a large extent how well their children succeed in school. Probably disadvantaged students could learn more and achieve more if home economics teachers were employed to concentrate on improving the quality of family life.

- Possess the ability and desire to effectively use community resources for the family benefit particularly social and educational resources.

The second broad goal is assisting girls to explore the dual role of homemaking and a career. It is essential that girls recognize they have at least three choices of a life style—as a homemaker and a wage earner, as a homemaker or as a career girl. Young ladies must have an opportunity to explore each in a positive climate; and regardless of

the option selected, it is important that they recognize the worth of that role.

Girls need to explore life patterns that enable them to break out of a culture sex stereotype that tells them what is expected of members of each sex. Psychologists have determined that most boys and girls can pretty well describe appropriate sex roles by ages seven or eight. Traditional socialization processes have created a kind of occupational foreclosure for both members of the sexes. Home economics can take the educational level in broadening the freedom of both boys and girls to perceive themselves in nontraditional occupational roles.

The third broad objective should be the preparation of both males and females for their roles in the family.

In the fourth objective, home economics education should insure that at the elementary and junior high levels there are experiences built into the curriculum that help youth experience both the family life aspect of our society as well as home economics-related occupations. At the secondary level home economics education should provide preparation experiences for occupations related to home economics.

The fifth objective for home economics is a responsibility to emphasize those educational processes related to career education. The home economics teacher can do much to teach both basic skills

that enable the student to discover his values and attitudes toward the family and about home economics-related occupations. He can do much to carry on interdisciplinary learning activities with other teachers. He can do much to provide leadership to other teachers in fusing family career awareness into all curriculum areas.

The sixth objective would be to provide adults with opportunities to develop family living skills. Adults are seeking better ways to adjust and provide a better family climate. A course for adults might range from learning about the educational development of children, needs of the family all the way to the physical and fine arts and home beautification. Just education has come to be viewed as a continuous process in terms of one's occupation it also should be viewed as a continuous process regarding the family.

The seventh broad objective for home economics education might very well be to strengthen the educational climate at home as a primary strategy for improving the performance of the youngster at school. In particular many disadvantaged youngsters have a very poor attitude about themselves as learners. Their families could be involved in education, work more with the youngsters, and take a greater interest in their education. A greater payoff in terms of performance in school might occur than with some other approaches currently being used.

How can home economics teachers achieve the objectives we have just examined? First, these objectives can certainly be achieved through exploratory home economics courses—courses being developed and continually revised and expanded.

Second, they can be achieved through interdisciplinary learning. Increasingly, the home economics teacher is found to be one of the better prepared teachers who has the capability of relating and applying science, mathematics, and communication skills. Other teachers are looking for leadership, and they are willing to look to people who know concrete ways in which their discipline relates to the world of work. Further, for many, many students in the schools, much of education is going to make little sense unless teams of teachers are willing to make the student the primary focus rather than their particular subject areas.

Third, the objectives outlined can be achieved through leadership, through helping other teachers build into their curriculum the concepts pertaining to career as well as family at the elementary, junior high, and secondary levels. Home economics teachers are better prepared than any other single group within the school to do this. They have the student as their primary focus and have acquired some leadership skills that help them in working with other people.

Fourth, objectives can be achieved through an expansion of home-based learning and giving credit and recognition to learning that takes

place outside school. Certainly this is not new, but it may very well be for many potential dropouts these kinds of experiences need to start much earlier. Also, the opportunities for home and community based-learning need to be expanded to other subjects within the school. It is also possible for home economics teachers to form teams with other teachers in this kind of effort.

Fifth, the number of quarter and mini-courses need to be expanded to attract all students.

In summary, home economics education is not different from career education, but career education should include as a primary thrust preparation for family life. Home economics should not lose its primary mission of preparing young people for family life. Home economics' greatest contribution, in the future as in the past, should be toward improving the quality of family life. I would challenge you not lose sight of that primary mission.